AN EPISTLE TO Young People Profeſſing the TRUTH.

Dear Friends,

KNowing that many which fear the Lord, and think upon his Name, have had (for ſome time) a concern upon their minds for the declining Conditions of many Young People that are amongſt us; ſaying often one to another, *What will become of the next Generation, conſidering the Youth of this are ſo degenerated from thoſe that received the Truth at the beginning.* Whereupon it came into my Heart, according to the Examples of Chriſt and his Apoſtle, who to rectifie abuſes in Marriage, and other things, ſaith, [*but it was not ſo from the beginning*] intimating, that the beſt way to amend things amiſs, is to bring People to the beginning, that as they received Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, ſo to walk in him, which is the Drift and End of this Epiſtle to Young People, and others profeſſing the Truth.

Many are yet alive who from their own knowledge can teſtifie the

Humility, Mortification and Self-Denyal of the Youth at the beginning, together with their contempt of all youthful Vanities, &c. their Words Few and Savory, their Countenances Grave and Serious, in their places Diligent and Faithful; being Examples of Temperance and Sobriety to Neighbours and Acquaintance; in the Worship and Service of God Attentive and Watchful, carefully improving all opportunities to encrease their Communion and Acquaintance with God in Christ Jesus the Light: All which were as blessed signes of those times of refreshment from Gods Presence that the Souls of the Faithful were then made partakers of.

Let Children inquire of their Parents (that were Eye Witnesses from the beginning) and they can tell them; let Servants ask their faithful Masters, and they can inform them what manner of People the younger sort of Quakers (so called) were at the beginning: Nay, there were few such Strangers in the places where the Truth first took place, but they could declare these things; by all which (as in a Glass) many now professing the same Truth may see themselves bearing another Image; therefore ought diligently to make inquiry what is the Cause, and whence the disparity ariseth, for if the Gospel at the beginning proved it self to be preached again by the forementioned, and many more blessed Effects upon all that received the Truth in the love of it; What is the matter? is not the Gospel an Everlasting Gospel and Christ the Way, the Truth and the Life, the same Yesterday to Day and forever? and doth not his works still in the hearts of the Called, Chosen and Faithful bear witness of him?

Therefore, its to be feared, those that are thus fallen, have received another Gospel, or the Gospel perverted, or turned upside down, as the Apostle speaks, seeing those at the beginning began in the Spirit, but since that many that began well think to be made perfect by the Flesh, where too many hold the Truth in unrighteousness: But my design is not to accuse, but to inform those that are out of the way, if possible they may be reclaimed before the evil day overtake them.

I know some of the Younger are ready to blame the Elder, and some Children their Parents, and some Servants their Masters Examples; to all which I say, that such as are justly guilty thereof shall bear their own Burden, and shall not escape the Righteous Judgment of God; but you that make this Plea, *know that the Son that sins shall dye*, and the Witness of God in your own Consciences (if hearkened unto) will convince you of the vanity of this Fig-leaf Covering, and the deceitfulness

ceitfulneſs of your own hearts in thinking that the evil example of others will be an excuſe for your backſliding.

For thoſe that in their Youth received the Truth at the beginning, were ſurrounded with Evil Examples on every hand, ſo that if Examples could have prevailed to continue them in Worldly Vanities, they could never have broken through thoſe oppoſitions from Accquaintance and neareſt Relations; for if they had looked outward, all hopes of Preferment in this World were wholy gone, and looking inward, there appeared ſuch ſtrong holds of *Satban*, as ſeemed impoſſible ever to be overcome; the Truth it ſelf being ſuch a Stranger in the Earth, that almoſt every Body was backward to give it Entertainment, Eſpecially if they had any thing in this World to looſe for harbouring of it.

Whereas the Youth and others of latter times found the Truth both ready proved, and ſucceſsfully defended againſt the ſubtil Arguments & Wits of thoſe profeſſing times in which it at firſt break forth, and that not by the might and power of Wit, or outward Learning, but by Simplicity and Godly Sincerity, accompanied with Holineſs of Life and Converſation, which was a great confirmation to the firſt publiſhing of it, together with the Meek and Patient, yet Bold and Valiant ſuffering the loſs of all for the Truth as it is in Jeſus; by which, in a great meaſure, the rough way was worn ſmooth, and the paſſage made much more eaſie to thoſe that followed, then it was at the beginning; for thoſe that were as gazing ſtocks at the beginning, of latter times came to be well known, and that eſtrangedneſs to Perſons and Principles came to vaniſh away, & a good eſteem of the Truth and of thoſe that profeſt it ſpring up in divers Perſons, ſo mightily grew the Word of God, and proſpered at the beginning.

But alas, of latter times the wild *Boar* of the Forreſt hath got into the Vineyard, and rooted up many hopeful Plants, & others are fallen into the Worlds Cuſtoms, Ways and Faſhions, who are become as Spots in the true Chriſtian Aſſemblies, and Blemiſhes to the Truth as it was at the beginning, as if the Sins of *Sodom*, which were Pride, Careleſneſs, Exceſs and Contempt of the Poor, were become the Vices of *Sion*, many young People and others getting into thoſe things again, which their Parents, Relations and Acquaintances, for good Conſcience ſake, were forced to lay aſide, as if in theſe latter times the Efficacy of Truth was not the ſame as at the beginning, and as if the Croſs of Chriſt, that was ſo powerful [then] was [now] become of none Effect.

Little doth the wanton Youth of this Age think what Sighs and Tears their godly Parents, and Friends that love them, pour out in secret for them, both because of their Eternal Estates hereafter, and the dishonour they bring here unto the blessed Name and Truth of God; whereby its become a saying amongst Antient People, *That the Quakers now adayes are not like those at the beginning.*

What Watchfulness, what Carefulness, what Diligence therefore ought every one to use; least by bad Company and Examples, they should be ensnared before they are aware, and so by degrees be drawn to such Inconveniences, as afterward they will find very hard to withstand, untill they are brought to that degree of stupidity, and hardness of heart, that all Exhortations unto Virtue and Godliness find so little entertainment, that even Strangers in our Meetings are more serious, and tenderness of heart sooner procured in them, then in many who have frequented our Assemblies from their Childhood unto Men and Womens Estates, so evil and catching are the bad Examples of others to them whose hearts are not kept tender to God.

Be serious therefore all you that make profession of the Truth in your tender years, and examine your selves how you came to make profession of it, was it for some by-ends and finister respects? or was it by Education from your Parents or others only? not regarding the good intention and end thereof, so as to come to the root of the matter in your selves, nor heeding to be guided by the Light in your own Consciences, but from time to time feeding only upon good words from others, *&c.* as its to be feared too too many do at at this day, I say, unto all such careless ones, I pity your Condition, for all your Goodness will prove like the morning dew that soon vanisheth when heat ariseth, and all your Profession will wither like the Corn upon the house top; therefore let the time past suffice that you have spent your precious time to no purpose, and rest no longer in an easeful mind, above the Cross, but sink down in deep Humility to the oppressed Seed of God in you, which he hath left as a Witness for himself, that you might not be as *Sodom*, and like unto *Gomorrah*, if you diligently hearken to it in your own particulars.

Parents and others that fear the Lord are bound in duty to God, to use all means they can to impress the tender minds of their Children, and Youth, with the sence of Gods Power, and in so doing they shall not loose their reward from God, although their Children when grown up, turn their backs upon it; for Parents at the beginning looked upon the

the Truth as the beſt Portion for their Children, not ſo much heeding their preferment in this World, if by any means they might have an intereſt in that which is to come; and in order thereunto they counceled their Children to mind the inward and ſpiritual Grace, that ſo they might not relie upon any outward and viſible thing for Preſervation and Defence, becauſe that inward and ſpiritual Grace was commended to us at the beginning, as the beſt Teacher *to deny Ungodlineſs and Worldly Luſts, and to live Godly, Righteouſly and Soberly in this preſent Evil World*; but if Young People will reject the good advice of their Parents and others, and degenerate from their Education, their Deſtruction will be of themſelues, and their poor grieving Parents and others can but mourn in ſecret for them.

Children and others ought to know, that there is no ſtanding at a ſtay or ſtop in Religion, *for not to go forward therein, is to go backward*; hence it it is that the Scripture ſaith, *Heb. 6. It is impoſſible for thoſe who were once enlightened, and have taſted of the heavenly gift, and were partakers of the holy Ghoſt, and have taſted the good word of God, and the powers of the World to come, if they ſhall fall away, to renew them again unto Repentance, ſeeing they crucifie to themſelves the Son of God afreſh, and put him to open ſhame.* And being a buſineſs of greateſt Importance the Apoſtle urgeth it from the Similitude following, *For*, ſaith he, *the Earth which drinketh in the Rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth Herbs meet for them for whom it is Dreſſed, receiveth Bleſſings from God; but that which beareth Thorns and Bryars is rejected, and is nigh unto Curſing, whoſe end is to be Burnt.*

If there be therefore any Conſolation in Chriſt the Truth, if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowſhip of the Spirit, if any Bowels of Mercies, you that live careleſsly and wantonly upon the Earth, conſider your Conditions, and examine your ſelves, how far the fore-mentioned Scripture affects you, for I have a deep concern upon my heart for you all that have forſaken your firſt Love, and bear another Image then thoſe young People I have mentioned bore at the beginning.

Suppoſe by your Conformity to the Vanities of this preſent World you ſhould gain a large ſhare therein, which but few obtain; what will it avail when terrifying Death looks you in the Face? have you forgotten *Moſes*'s Choice, who eſteemed it greater Riches to ſuffer Afflictions with the People of God, then to be related to the Court of a great Monarch? what ſhall I ſay to prevail with you, is it not great pity, that any who in years paſt bore the frowns of the great ones of the

Earth

Earth Patiently, went through Reproaches Cheerfully, and many Hardships Constantly, for some time, and doubtless such felt a Reward from God for their encouragement, why then should you loose your Crown at last?

Come let us reason together; and let God Witness speak, Wanted you any thing while you kept your Integrity? did you not witness one day in Gods presence better then all the delights that ever you had since your minds by Looseness and Vanities hath been estranged from him? did your Pleasure and Companions in Folly ever afford you that Comfort, and inward Contentment, and Peace, which sometimes you have felt amongst Gods People? why then do you deprive your selves by your negligence of that Sweetness and Comfort which no created Enjoyment can recompence the loss of, besides that farther hope of Glory that is layd up for those that walk uprightly?

Many of the youthful People and others amongst us need not say *What is Truth?* because I know it hath often proved it self to their Consciences beyond all outward demonstration, and they cannot be ignorant how divers that have backsliden have been followed with a secret hand against them in all they have gone about.

Come away therefore and tarry no longer in Lying Vanities, and let none say they cannot leave them, for that is the Language of your Souls Enemy to discourage you; wherefore resist him stedfastly in the Faith, and he will fly from you, for he hath no power but in Darkness and Unbelief; watch therefore to the Light of Christ Jesus that discovers all the twistings of that croked Serpent, and take up the daily Cross to those Evils that so easely beset you, and you will find, as you have often heard, the Armour of Light at hand to defend you against all your youthful Lusts, as blessed be God there are yet a Cloud of Witnesses alive that can from good Experience testifie the same.

Postscript

Poſtſcript.

LEt none deſpiſe theſe Lines for their Plainneſs, for we were a plain People at the beginning; I know ſome of the younger ſort are apt to be taken with fine Words and faſhionable Language, as with other things in Faſhion; but Experience ſhews that that which tickles the outward Ear commonly ſtops there, very ſeldom coming ſo low as to the Truth in the inward parts; therefore this Epiſtle is ſent abroad in ſo plain a dreſs on purpoſe, anſwerable to a plain Seed in them that are puft up, but ought rather to have mourned; which Seed being reached, and their Souls relieved my end is anſwered.

Laton *the* 18*th of the* 6*th Month* 1686. John Crook

THE END.